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A Review of the Women in Development Process

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1. Introduction

In the last decade and a half much discussion and debate has taken place in the international development community with regards to women and the development process -- most of it by women themselves. Recently, the momentum has increased to the point where it is not only fashionable but required that development proponents must, at least rhetorically, account for the effect of their projects and programs on women, and ideally, on the level at which women will participate. Agendas to address improving the lives of women through the development process currently stretch into the year 2000. This paper examines the way in which the global "Women In Development" process has taken shape since the early 1970s. It reviews the process in terms of participation, sheds light on the current situation and identifies areas requiring the attention of planners and researchers.

2. Historical Perspective

> *One does not have to be a feminist to view the position of women with dismay. The unrealized development potential of women represents an opportunity cost of major proportions for countries struggling under the weight of under-development* (Pearsonnotes, 1989:1).

Although it never made sense in terms of equity and human resource development to ignore the needs of 50% of the human race, it has never been as clear as it is today that one of the largest constituencies of the poor are women. The productive activity of women has been consistently omitted from equations on economic development.

It was not until 1970 that Esther Boserup, in her ground-breaking work, "Women's Role In Economic Development," introduced gender as an essential variable in the analysis of social science research. Until then development planners and social scientists had not disaggregated their data on the sexual division of labour. The historical process by which women came to the attention of the policymakers was basically the same in 1970 as it is today. A committee of women marched their concerns to the doors of the policymakers. The work of Boserup and others was carried to the policymakers by a women's committee

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of the Washington, D.C. chapter of the Society for International Development (Rathgeber, 1989).

2.1 Convergence of Development Goals and Feminism

Until the early 1970s development planners, economists and policymakers had not been concerned with how or even if women participated in defining the development goals of modernization and industrialization. At the same time feminists were largely concerned with the status and position of women in developed countries. In the 1970s, the two activities began to converge. Policymakers were being forced to look at the issue of women, and liberal feminists in the industrialized world were demanding that legal and administrative changes be made to incorporate women into the economic system. This meant they began looking at reducing the disadvantages for women in the productive sector (Jaquette, 1982).

Bourne (1983) disputes this historical account as being incomplete because it does not recognize that the women's movement originally borrowed its new perspectives from the civil rights and black power movements. Feminists, it seemed, had not only forgotten this debt but had gone on to suggest that their goals for feminism should be those of all women everywhere. As definitions of feminism from the developed countries were propagated via the growing network of international projects in developing countries, so were the biases inherent in them. Increasingly, there was a problem of marginalization which had a top-down layering effect throughout the international development system. Those with power -- whether by virtue of class, gender or race -- had a blind spot which prevented the full participation of all women. Women in general were marginalized from mainstream development and they in turn were marginalizing women in developing countries. Blinded by obsolete notions of modernity and even colonial ideology, it is unlikely that those in the dominant position perceived the situation in this way.

One result of such a process is superficial participation (Kasperson and Breitbart, 1974). Although purporting to be open to all participants, the development process actually systematically blocked the full and creative participation of some. A decade and a half later this is still a serious divisive issue.

Although the early seventies saw a broader global perspective on the issues which feminists were raising, it was not the voice of women globally that was being heard. It was still the voice of planners and feminists from industrialized countries who were discussing how the modernization process should be stretched to include women from developing countries. It was not long before the momentum of the women's liberation movement enticed a wave of activity in the international development community as a whole. That the two happened in relation to one another is not coincidence. The momentum and level of activity achieved by mass movements can be an influencing factor in bringing about the kind of change that requires major attitudinal shifts and changes to the basic structures of society. Their strength lies in the fact that at their root is a high level of grassroots participation in decision-making and management. This was true of the women's movement which was characterized by its expansive network of "consciousness-raising" groups.

2.2 UN Year and Decade for Women

In 1972 the UN General Assembly proclaimed 1975 International Women's Year. This proclamation served

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to give official notice that women were now an "issue" and therefore certain funds and programs would be directed at them for one year. It gave women from around the world a significant opportunity to begin discussing and strategizing among themselves. Although their issues continued to be marginalized from mainstream development concerns, women understood how important it was to have the focus on women officially recognized. In 1975 there was a meeting held in Mexico City to both raise awareness of women's issues and set the agenda for the work ahead.

Eventually this gathering was stretched into a decade when the UN declared 1975-1985 the International Decade for Women. Although a great deal of the organizing for such a global process occurred at a bureaucratic level -- particularly at the level of the United Nations and its executing agencies -- resources were being allocated for research into the position and condition of women.

In 1980 a conference was held in Copenhagen to review the first half of the decade's work. On a large scale many of the essential steps in any planning process had taken place: data was collected, and people met to dialogue, brainstorm and raise awareness. Goals were established and periodically evaluated. A new race to integrate women into the market economy had definitely started. Women's role in the economic process was now a topic included at most development forums. Yet, despite the sporadic achievements which were accomplished on a micro level, according to Taylor's world survey on women (1985), the situation for women has actually worsened when viewed from a macro perspective.

2.3 Women of the Developing World Challenge the Process

By 1985, at the End of Decade Conference in Nairobi, Women in Development had come of age as a critical but thorny issue. Alongside the official U.N. conference was another more provocative and informal venue called "Forum '85" which was attended by 13,000 women -- most representing non-government organizations. It was at this parallel conference that women from developing countries and minority groups in developed countries, such as African-American women, voiced their objections to dominant notions of feminism and development. These women would no longer be silent as priveleged women from the developed countries imposed what was viewed as yet another imperialist ideology on them. Although, in general, as women, they shared the burden of a triple role -- that of responsibility for reproduction, production and household and community management (Moser and Levy, 1986) -- their stories were different and they wanted them heard. For many women of the developing world, issues of militarism, racism and land tenure could not be separated from those concerns they shared with other women. At Nairobi, these women demanded that their voices be heard. They drew attention to the definition of feminism, racism, class issues and ethnocentricity in development planning. This was a jolt of awakening which forced internal theoretical debates into the limelight of the public arena. At open forums, recorded for all to see and hear, women from developing countries took up microphones and asserted their positions in a way which women from industrialized countries could not ignore. It was not the first time they had spoken, but being on their own turf, and numerically more dominant than before, they could speak from a position of strength.

Not only was the dominant agenda imperious in its view of the context in which women in developing countries lived, but it assumes that all women share exactly the same oppression by virtue of their sex -- regardless of class, race, ethnic or religious context. As Moser and Levy (1986) claim, it is an attitude which continues to permeate development planning. It is a doctrine typical of conservative feminism, one which views biology rather than patriarchy or another set of relations as the cause of women's subordination. This model for addressing the "women's issue" in development paralleled the 1970's development theories, but only marginalized the people it was intended to aid.

2.4 Planning Strategies for the Next Decade

Out of the Decade for Women came a commitment to continue pushing forward to the year 2000 -- a year which coincides with other international development programs. In preparation for the End of Decade

Conference in Nairobi, the United Nations had undertaken a survey of its members to evaluate the progress of the Decade for Women. The results were used to draft a set of strategies to further the advancement of women to the year 2000, which were later debated, ratified and agreed upon by consensus at the official World Conference on Women in Nairobi.

With regularity the machinery that administers the international development industry continues to produce information on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies For The Advancement of Women. Updates are made available to women's groups for local application -- a process which despite its very top-down nature, perpetuates a certain degree of valuable networking and momentum. Conferences are held in various countries frequently enough to keep issues on the international development agenda. Despite the tokenism inevitable in such a consultative process, women are able to meet to exchange ideas, share experiences and strategize. Three areas which have implications for changing the planning process have emerged as priorities for the 1990s:

1. Women in developed countries are re-evaluating their own backyards as a place to begin applying development strategies.
2. The older WID model is being critiqued and new theories are being put forward cooperatively by women from a wide spectrum of cultures and countries.
3. New standards of analysis are evolving from the new theories -- ones which support increasing levels of participation by all affected.

3. *Evolution of Theories on Gender and Development*

3.1 Women in Development

The term "Women In Development" (WID) became the catch phrase for the new challenge of integrating women into the development process. Projects born out of the WID framework centered around vocational and technical training for women, income-generating schemes, education, nutritional and medical advice. Most projects aimed to increase women's traditional skills while not interfering with their mothering and household responsibilities. The WID approach relates to both the reformist paradigm and liberal feminism, assuming that with a little upgrading women will be better able to fulfill their roles, contribute to their country's GNP and improve their socioeconomic status.

WID is non-confrontational and accepting of existing social structures and the basic tenets of the development paradigm. It assumes (1) that there is a worthwhile process to integrate women into, and (2) that women are not already involved -- that they must be integrated. This thinking unintentionally only serves to further marginalize women as it makes their contributions invisible. Women are already involved by the simple fact that they make up at least 50% of communities, produce more than their share of goods and services, and are greatly affected by development changes.

The focus of WID is on women's productive work as it is defined by the productive work that men do, and takes little notice of work, such as reproductive labour, which is not recognized by GNP indicators. The major project style is the women's only or women's component project. These types of projects are important and useful in many situations, and indeed make up the majority of projects still designed today, but are rarely participatory in nature. After closer evaluation it was found that women were often worse off than before a development project was implemented (ISIS, 1983). On top of their reproductive responsibilities and traditional work women were now expected to involve themselves in projects which they had no part in designing or choosing.

3.2 Women and Development

In the second half of the 1970s another model emerged based on Marxist feminist and dependency theories. Women and Development (WAD) attempts to explain women's position in terms of global class inequalities. It recognizes that women always have contributed their labour to both the household and market economies, but in a way which serves to perpetuate the existing structures (Rathgeber, 1989). Like WID, projects planned from a WAD perspective tend to emphasize income-generation as a way to improve the lives of women. Consequently it also ignores the fact that in

the long run this often puts a double burden on women, and may not be what they desire. Rathgeber (1989) notes that planners, like WAD proponents, tend not to assign economic value to the social reproduction work which women perform.

Keeping in mind the concerns voiced by women in the developing world at Copenhagen and again at Nairobi, WAD has a second critical weakness. Because it focuses on class, WAD disregards the relations of gender and race which in turn alienate women who are not from white middle-class cultures. Therefore, project designs do not take into account cultural or racial differences -- a serious consideration given many projects are designed, implemented and evaluated by mostly male, middle-class whites from developed countries. Women can only participate effectively in the development system to the extent that they act and think like the dominant group.

3.3 Gender and Development

In the 1980s the focus began to slowly shift from women to gender relations. Instead of targeting women as passive recipients of development who must be changed to fit into the development model, the emphasis is on the social construction of gender, and views women as change agents in their own self-determined development. The Gender and Development (GAD) theory parallels the doctrines of revisionist and socialist feminism and is based on an analysis of the connections and relations among gender, class and race. It rejects the "us and them" mentality of WID that isolates women from men, and instead supports both men and women who strive for social, economic and political equity. Rather than simply evaluating the position of women, GAD analyzes the position and condition of women in relation to men.

GAD neither focuses strictly on the productive nor the reproductive roles in society, but looks at the relationship of one to the other. It then relates the changes in gender relations to changes in larger social, political and economic systems. The GAD analysis purposely challenges these and other existing social structures. Because it calls for substantial societal transformations the GAD approach accepts that the development process is complex in nature and requires an holistic approach. This would be synonymous with the comprehensive approach in planning.

Although confrontational in that it questions fundamental structures, GAD is more open to a broad base of participation because it emphasizes community level organizations. It views collective groupings as bases of power from which to bargain, both politically and economically. The emphasis is on a bottom-up process. As Young notes, GAD "looks to the role of local communities to provide support for women and in some ways sees organization of women at this level as the precursor of organization at higher levels" (1986:4).

An important aspect of the community level organizing is the element of empowerment, which involves consciousness-raising but moves beyond it. It is an opportunity for people to understand the relationships and structures which maintain those circumstances beyond their immediate control -- such as poverty. "Understanding power structures and relations is an essential component of any process involving action for change" (Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1982:3). By participating in a process which reveals the knowledge particular to their situation, women and the communities they are part of are better able to produce appropriate solutions to their own self-defined problems. Perhaps because it holds a threat to the status quo that drives the development system, this component is often left out of WID projects. Unfortunately, it also reduces the opportunity to incorporate participatory planning into development projects and programs. As Rathgeber (1989) points out, the degree of commitment to structural change that is required is unlikely to be found in most international development agencies. Consequently, projects designed from a GAD approach are also hard to find. Support for this approach is only now beginning to grow in the agencies, although it has existed in locally initiated projects in developing countries for some time.

4. Differences Between WID and GAD

Figure 1 outlines some of the essential differences between the WID and GAD approaches particularly as they pertain to the process of planning.

Figure 1 Comparison of WID and GAD

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT	GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT
Assigns certain roles as "natural"	Relations and roles are malleable
Uses roles to define what women do	Looks at what women actually do in relation to what others do
Policies maybe fragmented	Policy-making is holistic
Only looks at basic needs and ignores larger context	Basic needs seen relative to strategic interests
Often works with women and children only	Sees the household as one unit, but does not assume resources are pooled
Looks at what resources are available and needed	Looks at what resources are available and needed and at access to them
Can ignore non-tangible resources	Recognizes three types of resources: economic, political and time
Assumes macro-economic policies are gender neutral	Realizes macro-economic policies have different impacts on men and women
Top-down, focuses on women as passive agents	Community level approach, focuses on women and men
Evaluated according to how much of the original plan worked	Accepts failures and surprises as part of development process
Defines responsibilities of planner in limited way, as one way donor, expert	Planner as participant, partner, facilitator, not knowing, learns also

Source: Adopted from work by Patricia Keays based on a 1987 workshop in Ottawa.

Despite the profound differences between WID and GAD, it is not always easy to find projects which are clearly one or the other. Each project is unique due to variables of time, place and human relations, and none is pure in its development practice. Furthermore, practitioners of both theories ultimately share many common goals related to a concern for women. Planners too would be wise to take this as their starting point and not allow themselves to become too theory-bound. "The point is that there is a limited amount of time and energy and the time that gets put into theory-building gets taken out of action" (Poff, 1989:7). Given that the feminization of poverty has not been reversed in two development decades, it is critical that planners be flexible and pragmatic, and not bound by theory, when involving themselves in development projects.

5. Implications of GAD for Planners

5.1 The Role of the Planner

Approaching development from a relational perspective which addresses gender still leaves planners with a good deal of liberal license to personalize their approach in order to suit specific situations. Gender-sensitive planning has two broad implications for planners:

A) Planners must recognize the importance of creating a process which includes quality, creative participation by *all* affected. Ideally this means allowing people to participate not just in the implementation of a project designed by others for them, but also in researching the cause of their circumstances, in decision-making and in problem-solving as well. For the planner this may mean a shift in attitude from an "us and them" mentality to thinking in terms of "us" only.

B) The role of the planner in GAD include the following functions:
* Facilitator: The planner helps create a forum for consciousness raising for action. The planner's contributes in a way which offers people an opportunity to see the bigger picture, and to better understand larger dynamics and structures.
* Lobbyist: Projects of a participatory nature, particularly those dealing with the advancement of women, are underfunded and undersupported. The planner can be of significant help in this area.
* Go-Between: The planner is in a strategic position to relay the actions and intentions of administrators, officials and bureaucrats to the

group in order that they understand their opportunities and obstacles better. The same is also true for information flowing in the other direction.

* Participant: The planner is a participant in the project. This is a two-way relationship in which the planner has as much to learn and contribute as anyone else in the process.

5.2 Dynamics Affecting the Planning Process

In gender-sensitive planning for development projects, the planner would be wise to recognize the following dynamics.

A) The traditional definition of development is based on theories and models which don't question the basic relationships of power or leave room for women's reality. Therefore, it is important for planners to actively seek the opinions and expertise of women in order that women can tell their stories for themselves.

B) Women are not often involved in identifying problems. Women's "participation" has many interpretations but it does not always better the position or condition of women. Including women more, and including more women is not necessarily the same as equal or quality participation for women.

C) Proponents of development projects often assume that increasing women's skills and resources in areas associated with females will bring overall benefits to those women. Planners need to view all roles as flexible and not gender specific. Sometimes women will want to fulfill non-traditional roles in order to meet their needs.

D) Too often women's interests and concerns are translated through the fieldworker, so that they are no longer grounded in the experience of the women. The default tends to be the language, ideology and values of the development proponent or agency.

E) Most fieldworkers, program developers and field contacts are men, while support staff tend to be women. This has an affect on how women's circumstances are interpreted and their needs misunderstood.

F) Development issues are global issues, and women's issues are everyone's issues. Both are increasingly linked through migration, tourism, multinational corporations, militarization, telecommunications and the production of advanced technology, education, and development programs. Development planners usually only consider these factors marginally. A process which includes comprehensive or holistic planning would serve the interests of women better.

G) Planning is too often done from afar by foreign non-government organizations. This process too often involves defining problems, goals, and solutions from the bias of western, male developers.

5.3 Questions that Need Asking

There are many questions that must be asked throughout the planning process if planning is to be gender-sensitive. These can be asked anytime or several times as relationships in the process are always dynamic and changing. As changes manifest the planner may wish to repeat questions previously asked as earlier planning steps are reworked.

The relational variables in any planning issue sensitive to gender must address questions such as: why are gender roles being changed and who is initiating the change? How are women involved -- especially relative to men? Is change efficient and productive for everyone, or only men? What work do women actually do, and does it change from season to season? What do women want to do if given the opportunity? Strategic questions must also be asked including: what allies can be made? Who controls and benefits from the project, and how? Who has access to resources? Where is intervention needed and when is it most timely? For a long-term process evaluation, questions of importance include: what succeeded or failed and why? Who participated, when, how and in what arena? These questions address issues of larger political and social context which manifest in the subordination of

women at the local level and affect both planning design and implementation.

6. Areas for Future Research

The increasing burden carried by women throughout much of the developing world calls for urgent pragmatic action (Moser and Levy, 1986; Rathgeber, 1989). It is time to give practical application to current theories by creating analytical tools which can be used in the development process.

There has been a great deal of work carried out on evaluating projects from the perspective of WID, but it can be argued that this has been largely ineffective because of weaknesses in the WID theory and practice. How successful can a project be when it is not based on a conceptual framework that supports real change? Projects are only now beginning to be evaluated and analyzed from a development perspective that acknowledges gender relations. However, equality for women in the development process has rarely transgressed beyond the rhetoric of policy into other stages of planning practice, such as design, impact assessment, and implementation. Until there is a committed effort to implement gender-sensitive projects and programmes, policies on women in development will remain a poor indication of whether or not women are benefitting and fully participating in the development process.

In order to understand what is and is not successful from the perspective of those immediately impacted by the development process it is important to continue undertaking in-depth case studies and analyzing them with respect to gender relations. This would be particularly useful research if the case studies were of projects which were indigenously designed at the community level or were highly participatory in nature. This information could then be compared to current policies on women in the development process.

Given the debate over what types of projects are most beneficial to women, there remains a need to evaluate *all* development programmes in terms of their impact on women (Dixon, 1980). This includes not only women's component and women only projects but policies, projects and the planning of programs in general. As noted by Moser and Levy (1986) the decision-making authorities at national and community levels in most countries remain "gender-blind".

7. Summary

Despite two decades of development activity, the state of women is no better. The feminization of poverty continues to grow. Two serious barriers to achieving any significant change are the marginalization of women within the development system itself, and the lack of opportunities for women's creative and full participation in the development process. It is only in the last five years that women from developing countries have raised their voices above those of other women in a way which is being heard. In 1985, the Nairobi Forum was a triumph for all women who refused to limit the goals of feminism and development to those defined by the developed world. All too slowly, the development industry is realizing the advantages and necessity of allowing women and men to be agents of their own change in the development process.

Two theories that hold particular promise are the Gender and Development theory associated with Kate Young, and the Gender Planning Theory developed by Caroline O.N. Moser and Caren Levy. The former has benefitted from the contributions of women from developing countries. As a research theory GAD is inspiring and useful as an analytical framework but may be challenging to implement in practical terms because its goal is to change the very social structures which subordinate women. Alternately, because the work of Moser and Levy addresses the importance of both strategic and practical needs, as well as methodology, it is potentially more pragmatic for planners. Both theories afford planners the basis for developing much needed analytical tools for practicing gender-sensitive planning.

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